2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1



of Geg Laz would be intermarriageable. He said gravely that there was no knowing what the future would bring. People might learn bad ways from abroad. For his part he hoped that so long as the world lasted Hoti would never marry its own blood.

He was very certain that Geg Laz and his family were Catholics. The names in the pedigree indicate that they were Albanophone. Only one, Vuksan, is Slav.

3. *Kastrati.*—This consists of some five hundred houses on the mountains between the Hoti and Skreli tribe lands. The name is probably derived from the Roman fort (*castrum*) which guarded the road round the foot of the lake. "Kastr" as a place-name occurs elsewhere in Albania. The Kastrati were evidently a powerful tribe, for in 1403 we find Alexius Kastrati headman in a list of Albanian chiefs who are rewarded by the Venetians with gifts of cloth. Fine cloth was much coveted by the Albanians and appears often as payment of service.

Three hundred houses of Kastrati are of ancient Albanian origin. They trace descent from one Delti, or Dedli, who came with his seven sons from Drekalovitch, a part of the Kuchi tribe. The Drekalovitch trace descent from the Berisha (see below), which is the oldest of the tribes. When they arrived they found other inhabitants there who are said to have been Slavs, and from whom the other two hundred houses trace descent. All are now Albanophone, and the majority Catholic; the rest Moslem. The groups are intermarriageable.

4. *Skreli.*—A tribe of one bairak in the valley of the Proni Thaat, mainly Catholic, stated that it came from Bosnia some three hundred years ago. The name is said to derive from Shen Kerli—St. Carlo, possibly the patron saint of a church which has been destroyed, as they now have St. Nikola of Bari as patron.

5. *Klementi*, often called by the Albanians Kilmeni.—A large and widely spread tribe of four bairaks—Seltzi Vukli, Boga, and Nikshi. They are said to descend from the four sons of Kilmeni or Klimenti, who fled with them vaguely "from the north," about thirteen generations ago. Baron Nopcsa states that they moved from the neighbourhood of Gusinje at the beginning of the seventeenth century and settled at Vukli. They are recognized as an old tribe by the Albanians. The four bairaks are intermarriageable, it having been decided they were sufficiently far removed by now. But in view of the strong feeling against "marrying one's own blood," in other tribes probably, in spite of the tale, there may be other blood in some of them. It has been said that they were different stems, and were gathered into one tribe by Klimenti, a mission priest. Be this as it may, they are some of the finest and most intelligent of the tribesmen.

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Seltzi—three hundred houses, all Catholic—is at the head of the Tsem valley, a lovely spot. It is divided into Djenovich Seltzi, which forms the majority and traces descent from the reputed ancestor Kilmeni, and the Rabijenovich Seltzi, which is of another stock, and some say is related to a tribe near Rijeka in Montenegro (? Tzrmnitza).

Vukli lies at the other source of the Tsem and consisted of ninety-four families, all Catholic.

Boga is at the head of the Proni Thaat, above Skreli. Seventy-five families, all Catholic. Boga intermarries much with Thethi. Nikshi, one hundred and fifty-four houses, almost all Moslem, lies between Boga and Vukli. All these people winter on the plains near Scutari to feed their flocks. They, too, have suffered much from the new frontier, which was purposely drawn by the Montenegrins so as to cut the road and make their journeys to the plain and town very difficult. Montenegro and the Serbs hoped thus to force Klimenti to fall into their hands, and the authorities sent by the Powers to delimit frontiers were too ignorant of the manner of life of the people to see into the matter. So-called "strategical" frontiers, drawn heedless of economic needs, are more likely to promote war than to prevent it.

6. *Lohe*, or Lohja, a small tribe of one bairak, consisting of eighty Moslem and forty Catholic houses. Of mixed descent from Shlaku and Pulati. Probably families flowed down into this more fertile district not far from the lake when Serb rule broke up, for "Loho" and its mills are mentioned in 1348 by Stefan Dushan among the districts which are given to the Church.

7. *Rechi*, a small Moslem tribe, gives same tale of origin as Lohja; and has also a few houses of "Anas."

8. *Rioli*, on the river, obviously takes its name from *rivulus*, another memento of Roman days. It is all Catholic. The cloth-fulling mills still clack on the river, and perhaps stand in the same place as some of those given away by Dushan. Like Rechi-Lohja, it is of mixed descent. These eight tribes form the Maltsia e Madhe group.

There are also on the shores of the lake two small Moslem tribes, Kopliku and Grizha. Kopliku as "Kopelnik" is also one of the places mentioned in Tsar Dushan's list. Between Kopliku and Scutari is the only Serb village of the whole district, Vraka, which derives its name from the Saints Vrachi: The Healers, SS. Cosmo and Damian, to whom the church was dedicated. Vraka had a thousand inhabitants, who all trace descent from various Bosnians, Herzegovinese, and Montenegrins, who in recent times fled from blood-vengeance and sheltered in Turkish territory. Far from being grateful for shelter they are a perpetual source of trouble. They are used by the Serbs as a "jumping-off ground" for complaints, and though they have their own Church

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1



[727] XXII Mountain Corps, whose Headquarters were at Yannina. The Kossovo was independently garrisoned, mainly by the German-officered Albanian division, S.S. Skanderbeg. The *669 Partisans, who now formed the chief Albanian resistance movement, were reported to have nearly fifteen thousand men under arms. Except, however, for insignificant groups these were all among the Tosks, south of the river Shkumbi. The Ballist forces were also concentrated in the South and about Tirana, but were now reduced to little more than five thousand men. We were thus tolerably informed of the numbers and circumstances of our German enemies and Partisan allies, but knew almost nothing of the military potentialities of the Zogist movement in particular, or of the Ghegs in general. Maclean and I therefore set out on 3rd May to join Abas Kupi and study conditions in Mati and Kruya for ourselves. Meanwhile Smiley and Hare remained at base to reconnoitre the precise dispositions of the Germans and to take soundings of opinion in Tirana.

[342] Abas Kupi and his staff had assembled in the fortress home of Tsen Lezi,[1] set in a cleft in the mountains high above the Mati valley. We joined him there about nightfall and found [352] the Zogist leaders seated round the hearth at the end of a long and narrow hall, lit only by the flames of the fire. The skins of sheep and goats were spread out on the floor as carpets, and the walls and rude crossbeams which supported the roof were black and shiny with soot. So must have been the keep of Dunsinane. Tsen Lezi, the master of the house, was wild and woolly like an aged bear, and grunted as he ambled out to greet us. His eyes were small and bright; his bushy moustache sprouted in all directions; and his clothes were brown and furry, homespun from the shearings of his sheep. ● 596 He ruled sternly over his family, or clan, for there were more than sixty of them living in the house, and directed every detail of dynastic policy: what land or livestock should be bought or sold, which of the children should be sent to school, what marriages should be made, what blood feuds prosecuted

[1] A Mati chieftain, not to be confused with the Dibran leader, Tsen Elezi.

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or compounded and, above all, what sides the clan should take in the strife of political factions. Tsen Lezi had long been a supporter of Abas Kupi and he received us well.

It was already May, but in the mountains we had still lived amid the gales and snow of winter. Next morning, however, as we descended from Tsen Lezi's house, we came out of the mists into the sunlight and saw the broad Mati valley spread out below us like a promised land. Fat sheep and cattle grazed in the undulating pastures; whitewashed houses, the tallest in Albania, were scattered over the low, wooded hills; and beyond the sparkling river the ground rose steeply to the wild glens of Mirdita. The guerillas had not left the mountains since autumn; and now, at the sight of the sunlit valley, the long line of men winding down the hillside broke into a strident song. Presently Abas Kupi called a halt and we sat down to refresh our eyes with the view. Hitherto I had always looked on mountains as holiday grounds; but the guerillas' song touched some atavistic chord in me and for the first time I experienced the weary highlander's longing for the plain.

Mati was rich and populated, the region where the tribal system of the mountains mingled with the feudalism of the coastal plain. The land and flocks were still owned and worked in common by the different clans; but their chiefs were already known as *Beys*; and the wealthier among them employed hired labour and rented out some of their fields to poorer families. The men of Mati were reputed devout Moslems and, as is often the way of the pious, they lived well; renowned for their lavish hospitality and comfortably appointed houses. They had prospered especially under the monarchy; for King Zog was a man of Mati and his first care had been for the people of his valley. Many, though they could not read nor write, had been given appointments in the civil service; and, following the tradition of the Turks, Zog had conferred reserve commissions on most of the *Beys*. This was not indeed to compel them to military service, but to bind them more closely to his cause by the payment of an honourable and regular pension. The valley had benefited, moreover, from an ambitious programme of public works; a road and

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and moil the whole blessed day', she ended, sadly rather than bitterly.

Toil and moil she did. The daily duties of every peasant woman in her position included fetching firewood from the forest and water from the river or spring, besides cooking, washing and baking for the household. At certain seasons she must also do farm work, so long as she retained a measure of youth. Her husband did heavy work like ploughing, scything hay, or cutting oak leaves for winter fodder. But she must carry the manure from the stable to the fields in spring, help her husband to sow and earth up the maize and, while he stayed indoors, reap it. She must carry home the hay and fodder and feed them to the animals. If grain was trodden out by horses or oxen, her husband drove them; if threshed with flails, she wielded them. If there was no miller, she conveyed the grist to the mill, ground it, and brought back the flour. Only if there were a miller did these tasks devolve on her husband, and then it was only in order to keep her virtue above suspicion. In poor families she was herself the beast of burden, and when young was expected to carry up to seventy pounds. In richer families she had a horse or donkey to do the actual carrying, unless her home was under snow in winter. Then she must brave the snow that confined the animal to its stable and bring in supplies of firewood and water, fodder and flour. Paucity of workers prevented her husband from having more than a couple of milch-goats or ewes, and these were tethered; it was she who tethered, watered and milked them. It was she, too, who turned their milk into curds (*kos*) or butter and cheese, arduous tasks in summer when milk sours easily. She also saw to the poultry and in her spare time knitted or span.

Fortunately for the women, there was almost no peasant household in which a young husband and wife were the only workers. The eldest child, boy or girl, began at seven or eight years of age to herd the goats as they roamed in search of food and saw to them morning and evening. This gave the mother some relief and provided the family with more food and, by the sale of the goats themselves or the kids, more money. When very small, the girl must spin or knit as she herded; when in her teens, she must sew her trousseau; but no extra tasks were expected of boy herds. Since, too, a man's mother and sisters never lost their legal right to share his home, a family might include the husband's mother and even

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his unmarried sister or his widowed, childless sister. In that event, while the younger women worked outside, his mother, if physically fit, remained at home to cook, sweep and bake, besides attending to the dairy and poultry. She also saw that any children who were big enough to walk but too small to follow their mother to the fields, did not fall into the fire or otherwise come to grief. She further entertained any men visitors who might come when her son was absent. She did not, however, wash her clothes or her husband's, should he be still alive, for even at the height of the busy season outside that was one of her daughter-in-law's duties. When she was no longer strong enough for her various tasks, she was sent out, complete with distaff, to herd the goats or plough-oxen and another woman succeeded her as housekeeper.

If the married pair had a separate bedroom, it was private property, as inviolable as a separate house would be, and no one other than the man and his wife and children might enter uninvited. Unless she was his wife, even the housekeeper was under the ban. It followed that when a wife worked outside, she must care herself for her bedroom, sweeping it, spreading the bedding at night, and picking this up again in the morning. She must also tend her children, and wash and mend their clothes, her husband's and her own, besides those of her mother-in-law. If she had a tiny baby, she carried it in its cradle on her back to the fields, left it in a shady place while she worked, and carried it home again in the evening.

If the house was too small to have a sitting-room, the husband ate in the kitchen. He never lingered over the meal, and in most districts ate alone unless his mother, privileged by having brought him into the world, wished to join him. A man who ate with his wife or sat much in her company courted public ridicule as unmanly and 'no class'. If there was a sitting-room, the husband probably took his midday meal in the kitchen and his evening meal in the sitting-room. Before supper he might invite his sons or even his daughters, if these were small, to share the comfort of the sitting-room for a little.

Peasant households with only one man in them were rare, since for economic reasons it was customary for several brothers or even several first cousins to live together until their children were of an age to marry. Then sheer pressure of population compelled the household to split up into smaller units, each with a house of its own.[1]

[1] See Chapter VI.

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592 The separation completed, each new household had its own
596 master and mistress, and its members were no longer under the control of the master and mistress of the old home, who now controlled only their own establishment. It was remembered, however, that the master of this smaller home was master of the house in which they had all lived together. When he was succeeded by his son or another, his former position was still kept in mind. So when the brotherhood formed at the first separation expanded into a kin the master of this house became the 'elder of the kin'. If his kin was the most important in the ward, his name was given to the ward and so perpetuated. The names of most wards were the names of such elders.

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shoot as much as they pleased but could not have their way; the village could not be shut up by mud, and the public good overrode private loss. The new road was a permanency and could not be closed or moved back to the old site except by the elders. According to Vatë Marashi, the bajraktar of Shkrel, it was easier to move the bad road than to try to mend it. If it was under water, all the owners of the land through which it ran had to unite to repair it, making a ditch, repairing bridges and so on. But they had to decide unanimously to repair it; if even one hung back nothing could be done. The ditch too could only be made where there had once been one before. And men whose land was some distance from the road would object to having the water diverted from the road towards their fields.

New roads were constantly being opened, if only because brothers were constantly dividing their father's property and setting up separate establishments. For the law said 'every field must have access to a public highway' and 'every house must have its road'. Consequently, the elders supervising the separation were careful to specify the exact direction and character of the old roads which the brothers might use and the new ones which they might make to and from their houses and fields. The laws were the same everywhere. If there were two brothers, each took half the father's field. When there was no cultivated land beyond this they might make no path at all or they might make a little path along the boundary between them, only two spans in width, as this was enough for their own needs. Naturally each set aside land for half its width; as this could not be worked, it was soon grass-grown. When there was someone else's field beyond their own and there was no other way of entering this, they were bound to leave a track wide enough for a horse laden with panniers of manure or for a pair of plough-oxen. As with a field-path the land for this track came from each.

A more complicated case occurred if three brothers inherited a field which had a public highway running along its length, and was divided into three longitudinal strips with the boundaries parallel to the highway. Let it be supposed that the family home remained in the central strip. A road to the highway from the inmost strip was a prime necessity. It was most economically made by constructing a path to the old road that connected the family home with the highway. But the new owner of the central strip might

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object to its coming so near his house. In that case the elders directed him and the owner of the outermost strip to leave land elsewhere for it. As for the houses which the brothers in the innermost and outermost strips had to build, the former had only to see that his stood the canonical distance, the width of the eaves from his neighbour's boundary. The most convenient and economical site for the outermost brother to build on was a corner by the highway. But remembering that his dog might bite strangers and his children be trampled on by passing animals, he generally built his house with its back to the road and its yard facing his field. Alternatively, in Krasniqë, by what seems undue licence, he could ask his neighbour to remove the public highway to his land. If the latter owned waste ground or a hill close by, he was compelled by the elders to accede to the request. He could only refuse it by convincing them that in its new position the road would spoil his land.

New roads were sometimes necessitated by sales of land, and might cause trouble. Suppose a field surrounded by four others was offered for sale and the owners of the surrounding fields were unable to buy it. Someone farther away, always described as a 'stranger', then bought it and demanded a road. The natural line for this was through the field between his purchase and his house. If the owner of this field objected, the stranger bade him buy the enclosed plot. When he refused, as he inevitably did, the stranger referred the case to the elders. If these, he said, could cite any previous purchaser of a field which had no way in and out, he could not claim the road. If, on the other hand, and this was sure to be the case, they found it was good law that 'land is never sold without a road' he had to have it. There was, as usual, no need to compensate the man whose land it took up. Fear of such complications made some men, when selling a piece of land, retain the adjoining road in case they themselves or their descendants wished to use it later on.

A man was undisputed and sole master of the path that led across his field from a public thoroughfare to his house and ended there. According to the letter of the law, whatever the condition of the public road—good or bad, a sea of mud or even washed away in a winter storm—animals and wayfarers had to keep to it or to find another. They could not bypass the bad stretch by taking the path to the man's house; that was his private property, reserved for

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greediest man would not venture to disturb the cairn or to steal land for which another had lost his life. 423 628 [425]

Near boundaries of villages and tribes might be won with a boulder and distant boundaries with a slab of rock. In the former event what was a contest in throwing the heavy weight took place; in so poor a country the weight could only be a stone. When the two tribes had quarrelled over a boundary each selected a champion athlete to throw the weight. Whichever threw it farthest won the land in dispute for the tribe. Father Gjeçov does not make it clear where the men stood for the throw. When more distant boundaries were in question, each champion carried a slab of stone or a rock on his back until he dropped under it. The one who held out longest won all the ground he had covered for his tribe.

The relations between a boundary and adjoining structures, such as a fence, wall or house, and natural features like hedges, trees and ditches, were as carefully regulated as the site of the boundary.

A fence or a wall generally enclosed a farmyard and sometimes a field, a vineyard or the like. Fences were made of hurdles or, much oftener, withered Christ's Thorn, depending on what grew in the locality. In the marshes at the mouth of the river Mat withies were interlaced between living willow trees planted like posts in the ditches surrounding the fields. In well-watered areas inland hedges of living Christ's Thorn were common. Walls were usually dry, like Scottish dykes; the more pretentious had their stones bedded in mud. Dry or mud, they were rare round fields, because fences were easier to make and less trouble to maintain. In upland pastures there were neither fences nor walls, presumably because the boundaries were too long. The rules for both fences and walls were pretty much the same. 417 351

When an old farmyard was divided between two brothers or cousins who were on friendly terms, their respective portions were separated only by boundary stones. When they were not on friendly terms what they did depended on the degree of their enmity. If not embittered, they built a wall three spans wide (60 cm.) or a fence, centred exactly over the boundary line and possibly broken by a door that led from one yard to the other. Each built half of the barrier and became the recognized proprietor of what he built. When it was a wall he made a square niche on his own side to mark his ownership. When it was a fence he had no such material way of safeguarding his rights but could always rely on 417 423 596

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public memory. If only one of the two wanted a barrier, he had to build it unaided and entirely on his own ground, leaving the boundary stones on his neighbour's side. In this case its position relative to these stones was enough to show whose it was, but he nevertheless constructed the usual niche on his own side. He could not, however, build the wall right against the boundary stones but had to leave its width free between them and its outer base. For the law said that any rain that fell on a man's house or wall must run off on his own ground and not damage his neighbour's property. It needed no legal compulsion, of course, to make him construct the various buildings in his own yard in such a position that their drips did not damage his fence. Incidentally the 60 cm. of free space served at need for a footpath. When two brothers were embittered, each built a partition wall, naturally without a communicating door.

If a man wilfully damaged a tree or other property on his neighbour's land he had to answer for his crime by paying damages. If a stranger who did not know he was trespassing on another's property and was not warned off by a shout from the owner did similar damage, he, too, had to appear before the elders. But if he could prove ignorance of trespass, he had no damage to pay. To keep animals under control so that they should not stray to another's property, a wall or at least a fence round the yard was an essential concomitant of a house. This too had to be its own thickness inside its owner's boundary to guarantee that rain drips did not damage the ground next door. In the Malësi e Madhe the man building the wall could claim any timber that during building operations fell not more than half-way down on his neighbour's side. But whatever fell more than half-way or reached the ground—even the scrap of land he had left himself between the wall and the boundary—became his neighbour's. This discrimination applied to every form of wall.

Sometimes when one of two brothers was enclosing his yard he was permitted to utilize his neighbour's wall for one side of his enclosure. There was no risk of this confusing the ownership of the wall, for the neighbour, when building it, had not only put a proprietor's niche on his own side but had also left the boundary stones outside so that they fell within the new yard. A more distant relative could not utilize an existing wall, but had to build one of his own, parallel to the neighbour's and distant by the

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regulation width from the boundary. If this involved him in more expense it also saved him and his descendants from ever quarrelling about the wall. It also gave his dog room enough to run round his house at night, a not unimportant point. But even a brother could not be allowed to erect a building against his neighbour's wall. The risk from the drips of rain from it was too serious.

If one neighbour wished to fence or wall in his field he did no wrong, strictly speaking, by building the barrier along the middle of the grass-grown footpath along the boundary between fields, and so on the very boundary line. But this caused so many quarrels that in Mirditë and the Malësi e Madhe the law bade him leave the width of his barrier free between its outer base and the boundary, just as he must do when building a wall across his courtyard. In its wisdom the law was providing for the future.

Theoretically, a man could not only build his fence or wall along a boundary line, but could also ask his neighbour to make half of it. In practice, however, the neighbour might be too lazy or might say he was too poor or too ill to do his bit. In Kastrat[1] he could be fined 250 grosh and three rams for his unneighbourliness, and this possibility sometimes drove him to action. In the ingenious Malësi e Madhe the first man might in malice run up a fence parallel to the boundary but with an opening sixteen spans (3·20 metres) wide at either end. This ensured that his animals strayed through the opening on to his bad neighbour's field and ate it up. To give the neighbour no chance to make him move his fence he ran it up four spans, half the width of the horse-track, from the boundary. Most men, however, preferred to make the whole fence themselves, constructing it at least half the width of a footpath from the boundary. If two neighbours made half the fence each, but one made his half badly, this man was at fault—whether his sheep strayed into the good fencer's field or the good fencer's into his. The loss always fell on him; in the first case he had to compensate his neighbour, and in the second he had no right to be compensated for the damage done by the animals.

Sometimes a man wished to fence in a field which was bounded by a road. In Krasniqë and some other hilly districts he had to leave a strip of his land as well to allow for the fence slipping down on to the road, an ever likely possibility.

Most hedges of dead thorn were directly over the boundary line,

[1] See Appendix, Document V, § 11, p. 264.

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CHAPTER XII

# ELDERS

It is impossible to understand the laws and customs of the Albanian mountains without a knowledge of the varieties and responsibilities of the elders. A man could be an elder not only in the literal sense but as a legal personage. Seven types developed in sequence one from another among the southern tribes.

Everywhere the word for 'elder' is (sing.) *plak* (plur. *pleq*), which is pure Albanian and means literally 'old man'. There is a corresponding feminine (sing.) *plaka*, 'old woman'. In households of any size there might be several men and women who were really old in years and were 'elders' in the literal sense. These were the first type. The majority were ordinary people and had no legal importance.

The idea of age disappears with the second type, found in every household irrespective of its size. Here there were always one man and one woman who bore the special title of 'old man (or elder) of the house' and 'old woman (or elder) of the house'. These under their more usual Albanian titles of master of the household and mistress of the household were not necessarily elders in the sense of 'older people'. They might have attained their position when under forty and have found themselves in authority at that comparatively early age over older men and women.

The third category of elders appeared as soon as a household split up and each brother or male cousin in it acquired his own house. Then, a 'brotherhood' (*vllazni*) was formed. In this community each new house was as much a separate entity as the parent one, and was no longer under the control of the master and mistress, the 'elders' of the old joint home. It had its own 'elders' of both sexes who managed all its affairs, external and internal. The 'old man' of the joint home, now administering a much smaller household, thus lost a proportionate share of his importance. But the new masters also lost some of theirs. So long as the family lived together any competent adult among them might deputise for the master in village or tribal affairs or in the administration of the communal home, but from the day they separated,

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the old master reserved such business for himself and his sons, leaving only their own concerns to the masters of the new houses. As he remained the eldest or the most capable of the brothers, his help and advice tended to be sought by the others, particularly in external business, and his opinion was more regarded by outsiders such as tribal or government authorities. So he developed into the 'old man (or elder) of the brotherhood'. As the generations passed and the houses of the original brotherhood split up in their turn, the dignity of brotherhood elder remained in his family, handed down inalienably from master to master. The term 'brotherhood elder' was little used, however; 'first (or head) of the brotherhood' was preferred. There was no woman elder of the brotherhood or any larger unit. The mistress of the household of a brotherhood elder had neither authority nor influence outside his house, as he had. She was a foreign importation into the brotherhood, a stranger to it in blood, her only duties being to bear her husband's children and to work in the house, her only rights proceeding from her fulfilment of those duties.

In course of time so many households split up that a number of new brotherhoods were formed. In some the sense of brotherhood or even cousinship with the others faded, and only a remoter feeling of kinship due to descent from a common ancestor persisted. The agglomeration of brotherhoods then constituted a 'kin' (*fis*). In this, the fourth type, each brotherhood retained its own elder, and at the same time looked up to the elder of the original brotherhood as leader, calling him 'elder of the kin' or 'head of the kin'.

In the next, fifth stage of development several kins united to form a village. They might be distantly related to each other as in the village of Vuksanaj in Shalë, or of quite different stock as in the village of Nangë in Lumë. If related, they remembered which kin descended from the eldest brother in the ancestral home and regarded the elder of that kin as the village elder. If not related, they selected one of the kin elders, preferably the head of the strongest kin, for that position. Alternative names for him were 'senior elder', 'senior headman' and 'head elder'. According to the usual pattern of development each kin and each brotherhood in the village retained its own elder. Already it is possible to understand such data as the following. In the tribe of Lurë there were twelve elders, two for each kin. In the village of Perlat there were two men called village elders or senior elders; in the last days

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Assemblies of tribe or village watched above all over their honour. Sometimes their interpretation of honour took strange lines. Father Gjeçov gives the following story from the Mirditë tribe of Spaç. The sister of a villager of Gomsiqe was married to a villager of Dush in the same tribe. It happened that on one occasion when she came to pay a visit to her brother she took ill and died. He and his friends laid her on a bier and carried her, not to their own cemetery, but to her husband's house in Dush, presumably to avoid the expense of burying her. When the village heard what they had done, they met in General Assembly, and after carefully appraising the dishonour brought on Gomsiqe by such a public exhibition of meanness, fined the man a cow. This they divided into fifteen portions, which they distributed among the fifteen houses of the village. The fine was justice at its most precise. If the man had buried his sister as he should have done, the funeral feast would have cost him a cow. The event took place about 1903.

Another type of meanness had a similar end. About 1872 a villager of Urë e Shtrejtë in the tribe of Drisht happened to call on a neighbour about midday and was kept for dinner. As they finished, his host scraped his plate. The visitor afterwards complained to the village of the disgrace brought on his own dinner-table by the host. The village met in General Assembly and fined the host 500 grosh for his meanness. According to the law 'a dinner-table is disgraced in a guest's eyes when the host wipes or licks the porringer or scrapes his plate'.

The smallest General Assemblies—those of brotherhoods and households—dealt with what were essentially family matters. They met perhaps to decide on expelling or even killing any hopeless member if his misdeeds were serious enough to threaten the whole brotherhood or household with wholesale punishment by the tribe. They considered the pros and cons of buying an extra bit of land.

Tribal government was entirely democratic—of the people, by the people and for the people, but it differed from tribe to tribe and from time to time, enough to prevent unity. As the tribes in general would not have accepted the law of any one of them as supreme, it was ultimately necessary for Albanian unity that tribal government should be superseded by a modern system evolved in, and exercised from, a capital.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EG1 Albania EG1



CHAPTER XXI

# MURDER WITHIN THE FAMILY

682 627 596 When a man murdered his son, father, brother, paternal uncle, paternal uncle's son, or brother's son, the usual verdict was that in killing so near a relative the murderer had 'killed himself'. The victim's blood was therefore lost, 'no one sought-to-avenge him', and it had only been his 'ill-luck' so to die.

From another point of view it might be argued that since the murderer was the victim's nearest relative, other relatives could not act over his head and avenge the dead man. For example, when a man murdered his paternal uncle, if the latter left neither son nor brother, his blood was lost, for the murderer was his nearest relative and by killing him had only killed himself. On the other hand, if the uncle left either a son or a brother, that son or brother was nearer to him than the murderer and avenged his death. In view of his relationship to the criminal his vengeance generally took the form of exacting blood money. In the same way when a man murdered his brother's son, the victim's blood was lost if he left neither father nor brother. But if he left either, the murderer had to pay blood money. The rule of the nearest relative failed only if one brother killed another while their father was alive. Though the father was the nearest relative of the victim, the fratricide being only a neighbour by comparison, the victim's blood was lost. The father could not avenge him except by killing his surviving son, and even from the best of motives no decent father would kill a son.

[672] The motive of the murderer seldom affected the situation. The murder of a son, an extremely rare occurrence, was oftenest due [684] to his adultery with his young stepmother. His blood was lost, not because of his sin, but solely because the father who murdered him [587] was his nearest relative. Again, one brother sometimes fell in love with the other's wife, and knowing, especially in north Albania, [607] that if she became a widow he could by customary law marry her, could not always resist the temptation to make her a widow. The [558] victim's blood was lost in spite of the murderer's motive, and the fratricide married the widow and suffered no disability except some loss of face.

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl



loss of face. At Krujë in 1930 when the authorities sought to punish a man who had murdered his brother during a quarrel, the widow swore that the pistol had gone off accidentally when her brother-in-law was trying to wrest it from her husband, who had threatened suicide. Having thus prevented the authorities from taking action, the widow made no effort to keep the true story of the murder quiet, but repeated it every day during the month when the women met for the ceremonial 'keening'. She was also openly commended by the public for preventing the government from shaming her husband's family by arresting the murderer.

Exceptionally, if the murderer's motive was bad by tribal standards, his relative was well avenged. For instance, if a man killed his cousin or nephew to get his land, the crime was considered so anti-social that the murderer was killed by the community, his blood was lost, and his family expelled. Again, exceptionally, a motive might be so good by tribal standards as to win the murderer public admiration. Thus children in Shalë were taught with great pride that once a tribesman killed his brother for killing a guest, for an Albanian's duty to his guest transcends the claims of blood relationship.

Two modifications of the general rule are to be noted. In Mirditë in spite of the victim's blood being lost, the murderer had to pay the tribe the fine due in cases of ordinary murder, 100 rams and an ox. In the Malësi e Madhe if the two brothers had separated the fratricide had to pay blood money to his brother's dependants. If the widow had no children, she took all the money; if she had a daughter only, she again took it all, for when the time came for the girl to marry, she would as 'head of the family' have to pay the wedding expenses; if she had a son, he took all the money, for his father's death had made him head of the family. The blood money was therefore alimony payable to the widow and orphans who had been robbed of their breadwinner. If the two brothers had not separated, the fratricide as a matter of course supported the widow and orphans along with the other members of his household and the question of alimony did not arise.

Parricide was thought the most abhorrent of all murders within the family. In a sense a father had the right to kill his son without being asked by anybody what he had done, but a son unnatural enough to kill his father could surely not have been got by that father, but must be a bastard. Even where his crime was regarded

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl



couple were buried in any sort of hole, but in separate graves without a hoxha or being washed on boards and changed. In Lumë other customs prevailed. Both were buried in the cemetery in the ordinary way, unless they had been caught outside in some wood or thicket, in which case they were buried where they were killed.

Public opinion is growing against such double murders. It was too often the custom to give young girls to old men, with the inevitable result that the young wives were apt to fall in love with men more of their own age and had therefore to be killed by their fathers.

At Zdrâjshë, when a bride was found on marriage to be pregnant by another man, the unusually mild divorced her at once, but the general rule was to have her killed. The groom locked up the bride, sent for her father, and bade him find her lover. The father always asked for three or four days' respite during which he made inquiries. If the bride had indeed done wrong, an honest father sought out and killed the lover and then came to shoot his own daughter. Or perhaps he gave the bridegroom a cartridge and bade him shoot her with it. All the principles involved are well illustrated by a story from Lurë, still the most undisciplined of all Albanian tribes. About 1928 Metë Hoti, having taken a bride from Vehib Runa in Gur, found her within three months of bearing a child by another man. He sent her back to her father, bidding him find the lover and kill them both. The father would not kill his daughter and persisted in his refusal in spite of Metë's threats to kill the whole family if he did not do so. The father's kinsmen supported Metë, and when he came one night and killed the father, mother, daughter and infant and four other people in the house, they refused to avenge these deaths because the father had transgressed against the unwritten law. For the same reason the government merely imprisoned Metë for a few months.

A woman might be killed for various reasons by a man in her husband's or her father's family. For example, her husband or his representative had leave to kill her for heinous crimes like adultery, incorrigible pilfering, or murdering one of his relatives, but if they killed her for any other reason, her father killed one of them. Two principles were involved: one, that a man bought only the services of his wife and not her life; the other, that a woman retained till her dying day her right to protection by her father's family. Her son by the murderer could not avenge her, because killing his

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl



682 562 628 596 [607] father, his only means of doing so, was forbidden. Her son by another husband, belonging as he did to another family, was free to avenge her. If a woman's son killed her for any but the above heinous crimes, her husband could not avenge her, since to do so he must kill his son. In Mirditë her brother could kill her son or other male in his family, but elsewhere it was held that her brother was as helpless as her husband because her son was a nearer relative and her nearest relative having killed her, her blood must be lost. If she was married for the second time and was killed by the son of her former marriage, her husband could kill his stepson, but as before, her brother's hands were tied, except in Mirditë, by the law of nearest relative.

When a man killed his brother's wife for any other reason than those stated above, her husband took no action if he and the murderer had not separated; the murder was a family affair. Her brother, however, killed one of them. If the two brothers had separated, the murderer had to pay blood money to her husband. If the husband did not exact it within a year, her brother killed either the murderer or her husband. Her husband never killed his brother: 'I'd never kill my brother for the sake of my wife', was a common saying.

When a woman was killed by her father or brother, her blood was always lost by the rule of nearest relative. If she was married, her husband did not, in most districts, continue friendly relations with the murderer, but in some, such as Krasniqë, he asked him for another girl and on receiving her forgot his annoyance at the other's [584] murder. The same was true if the murdered woman was only betrothed, for a betrothed girl 'is counted the man's wife'. When a woman was killed by some other man in her own family, by her uncle or her nephew for instance, by the rule of nearest relative her [593] blood was lost if she was neither married nor betrothed. If she was either and was not killed for a heinous crime, her husband felt he had been disgraced and avenged her by killing a male in her family.

When murders were committed by women, the situation was complicated by the fact that women belonged to two families, their husband's and their father's.

[672] If a woman murdered her husband, both his family and her father's were involved. The important factor was her motive, which was usually love for another man who had probably bought the necessary rat poison in the bazaar. If her lover was her

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husband's brother, she married him and her husband's blood was lost exactly as if he had died by his brother's hand. If her lover was an outsider, her husband's brother killed her. He had the right to do so, woman though she was, for a question of honour was involved, and for questions of honour women might lawfully be put to death. Her son by the dead man could not kill the murderess because matricide is not allowable. Her husband's son by another wife was under no such inhibition, for he was only her stepson and therefore no relative. If her father's family believed in her adulterous motive, they sent a cartridge to her husband's brother, thereby signifying that they gave him leave to kill her and would not avenge her death. If they did not believe in the alleged motive, they avenged her by killing a man in her husband's family and an unusually bitter feud resulted.

Sometimes her husband's brother was too high-spirited or too angry to rest content with killing the murderess and killed one of her male relatives as well; he would plead that a woman's blood could never equal a man's and that her male relatives were responsible for her misdeeds. Sometimes a murderess escaped alive to her father's house. In that case she was held to have escaped from the suzerainty of her husband's family and became a stranger; as a stranger she must expiate her crime, but her sex shielded her personally and threw the onus of expiation on her male relatives—'Women don't have blood feuds'. Her husband's brother was therefore bound to kill one of her relatives. To avoid losing a male for his daughter's crime her father sometimes killed her himself, a desperate act that always satisfied her husband's brother.

A woman rarely murdered any other man than her husband. If she did murder her brother, it was assumed that it had happened by accident as he was her surest protector. There are no records of the murder of father or paternal uncle by a woman.

The last category of murders within the family includes the very rare cases in which a woman murdered a woman in her husband's or her father's family. If she murdered her mother or her daughter, both most unlikely contingencies if she were sane, the victim's blood was lost by law of nearest relative. In all other cases the result depended on whether her victim was single or married. Thus the murder of her unmarried sister, paternal aunt, brother's daughter, counted as a suicide and the victim's blood was lost. If she murdered her husband's sister, the victim's blood was again

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl



582 lost because the only possible avenger was the woman's husband,
562 who was not likely to kill the wife, who had cost him good money, for
628 the sake of his sister, though he was more likely to do so for the sake
596 of his father or brother. If she murdered a married woman of her
[607] own kin, her victim's husband exacted blood money from the males of her family or perhaps another girl. If she murdered a married woman in her husband's kin, his brother's wife, for example, or her own brother's wife, her victim's brother exacted blood money or even a life from the males in her family.

When a woman killed the wife of her husband's brother, her victim's husband had to suffer the loss of his chattel in silence. He could not kill the murderess because a man might not kill his brother's wife for any reason other than adultery or thieving. Nor could he kill her husband because a man might not kill his own brother. In his default his wife was avenged by her brother, who might kill either him or his brother if they were not separated, but only him if they were. Whatever the issue, her sex saved the murderess from expiating her crime.

[606] When a woman killed her mother-in-law or her daughter-in-law, her sex again saved her from expiating the crime. Her victim's brother was the only possible avenger, for no member of her husband's family could kill the murderess for anything except adultery and thieving. The avenger could kill any male in the family of the murderess; the marriage relationship did not count.

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl



CHAPTER XXII

# BLOOD FEUD

## I. FAMILY VENGEANCE AND COLLECTIVE VENGEANCE

To understand the fabric of the Albanian blood feud it is essential to remember several things. Till after the 1914–18 war communications in Albania were so bad, government centres so few and the gendarmerie so ill-organized that communities were largely self-governing. These communities consisted in the narrower sense of the family, and in the wider sense of the tribe. If a person was injured, the family in most cases, and the tribe in a few cases, by the law of self-government punished the wrongdoer. Since the individual was almost completely submerged in his family, an injury to him was an injury to the whole family and might be punished by any of its members. When the tribal community was involved, the injury might again be avenged by any of its members. When the injury took the form of murder, vengeance generally took the Mosaic form of a life for a life, but sometimes was achieved by the exaction of blood money or the imposition of exile.

When the family of a murdered man, in default of government action, took the punishment of the murderer into its own hands and killed him or one of his male relatives, the head of his family might admit that both sides were equal and make peace. On the other hand, while still admitting that both sides were equal he might prefer to continue the feud by killing a second male from the avenging family; that done, a second life was forfeit on his side. In this way the feud might rage backwards and forwards for years or even generations, each family being in turn murderer and victim, hunter and hunted. 'To take vengeance' was 'to take the blood' (that is, of the man already killed, not of him who was to make atonement); the criminal was called 'the bloodstained', and avenger and criminal thought of each other as the 'enemy'. In north Albania the criminal was also called the 'agent' and the avenger the 'master of the blood of the victim', i.e. the master of the house in which the victim lived. 'To incur a feud' was 'to fall into blood' or 'enmity'.

This simple outline was filled in with all manner of elaborate

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl



*628 596 details; vengeance could not be taken indiscriminately, but was governed by a multiplicity of rules. Thus, a murdered man found his most natural avenger in his brother, especially if they had not separated. If his father was not too old, and his son too young, to bear arms, they shared the brother's obligation. In slightly less degree so did his father's brother and cousin in the male line, and their sons and grandsons, that is to say, all the other males who were in the collective sense his 'father', 'brother' and 'son', through being at the time, or having recently been, members of his household. If his son was in the cradle, the child's mother and the neighbours told him of the crime as he grew up and urged him, failing another avenger, not to rest till he had done his duty. No matter which of these relatives took revenge, his 'rifle could be hung up' and 'go to sleep', to quote the picturesque phrases of Dibër and the North. The lawful representative of his murdered kinsman because he belonged to the same household, he had only made the two sides equal, with one of two results; either peace could be made or the feud continued between the same two families.

A man might kill his enemy where and when he could—in a chance encounter, in a meeting deliberately sought or in a carefully laid ambush. If he was 'strong' with plenty of good shots in his house, he and his family went alone on set expeditions. If he was weak he was probably accompanied by friends, who included friends in the ordinary sense, relatives by marriage, dependants and servants. They came, not for pay, but on his invitation or of their own accord. Invitations, always verbal, requested the recipients to come with so many rifles to such-and-such a place by [571] such-and-such a day and hour. Those invited were bound to come; those who volunteered were praised by the public for their bravery and devotion, a much coveted distinction. The distance from which they came was immaterial; a feud had no geographical limits.

[572] If the enemy fell to the rifle of a friend, the shot was always credited to the 'master', who was expected to assume responsibility for it. The enemy accepted the kill as a bout in the feud and either made peace or continued the feud with his original antagonist. The friend who fired the fatal shot could 'hang up his rifle' and let it 'go to sleep'; he did not need its protection for he was quit of the affair. If he had been alone when he killed the man, he would have 'brought the feud home', i.e. involved himself in a separate feud with the victim's family while leaving his friend's feud unaffected.

2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1
Historical Albania EG2



A 779 582 Finally he said he supposed he could not; but that such a case had never occurred, and he hoped he should never have to do anything so horrible. So long as he lived in the mountains he was safe.

I dared not ask how many cousins in the female line he had married A in all good faith.

614 The tribe is sometimes a group of several stocks, in which case marriage within the tribe is possible between them. These groups are called "bairaks" (standards: Turk.). Some tribes consist of but one bairak. The head is the "bairaktar" (standard-bearer). This post is hereditary from father to eldest son. Of old the bairaktar is said to have been important. In my time he had lost ground and was often quite cut out in council by abler men.

A 596 Each bairak contains many groups, called "vlaznii" (brethren), consisting of a family group including second cousins or even further. The Turkish word "mehala" is also used for these groups.

H 114 779 A vivid picture of North Albania before the coming of the Turk is given by Father Brocardus, a Dominican who wrote an account of the routes suitable for the Crusaders in 1332, and presented it to his sovereign, Lord Philippe de Valois. He shows Albania under Serb rule. Especially he recommends the route from Brindisi to Durazzo, and thence across "Abbanie where the people are devout and obedient to the Church of Rome," and thence by way of the Blaques (Vlahs of the Pindus) to Thessalonica.

Of the Kingdom of Rassie (Serbia) he says that it is a land where Catholics are treated with insult and violence. He proposes to the King of France: "Some movements to assail it, and certain easy conditions for taking it. . . . Among other things there is one which does much to make the capture of the said Kingdom of Rassie more H easy. Be it known there are two nations, the one the Abbanois, and the [794] other the Latins, who are both of the faith and owe obedience to the Church of Rome, according to which they have Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, and religious and secular priests of lower estate and degree. The Latins have six cities and as many bishops. These are Antivari—the Archiepiscopate—Cattaro, Dulcigno, Suacinense, Scutari, and Drivasto. In these cities only Latins live, and some are without the walls. In all their dioceses are Abbanois, who have also four cities: that is to say Polat Major, Polat Minor, Sabbate, and Albanie, which H together with the Latins are all subject to the Archbishop of Antivari" 197 (these "cities" are, in fact, districts), "and his Church. And though 212 these *Abbanois have a language quite other from that of the Latins, they* 245 *use the Latin letters in all their books.* Thus the power of the Latins is enclosed within the circuit of the cities which are theirs, though they H 702 have some vineyards and fields without the cities. . . . The Abbanois

In Mer -

178 795 [55] turi and Nikaj, the men adopt 2 sets of names, Moslem and Christian, and employ the former while traveling to avoid trouble. They get used to these names and in many cases use them at home. In Hoti, the *bairaktar* once led his men against the invading Serbs, with the help of the Turkish government. In gratitude for his brave and successful conduct the Turks granted him special privileges, and he went over, with his family, to Islam. The rest of the *bairak* is still mostly Catholic, but the tendency in such a case is for the others to follow the leader. In Lura, where mixed families are found, the Catholics have given up keeping pigs so as not to offend the Moslems, and celebrate Moslem festivals as well as Christian ones, to avoid trouble. Very rarely a Mirdite will marry a Moslem woman from Mati, but when he does she becomes Catholic.

797 144 When the Turks introduced Islam, all Ghegs were Catholics. Almost exclusively, the change has been in the Moslem direction. Hence we may assume that almost none of the present-day Catholics bear genetic elements brought in from outside the region by the Turks or their followers, while the same is not necessarily true of the Moslem Ghegs. *Bairak* by *bairak* and tribe by tribe, as conversion progressed, the line between the 2 religions has remained, by and large, a marital barrier. During the whole period of the Turkish rule, Catholics have furthermore been able to travel much less widely than Moslems, with resultant genetic implications.

771 In Albania one frequently hears the remark that "the Albanians are not very religious." This is usually said with pride, for the presence of 3 religions in so small a country is deemed a dangerous impediment to political unity. In one sense, the remark is quite true. Few Albanians are religious fanatics; few of them worry about their spiritual salvation. Most of the Catholics go to church with some regularity, and most of the Moslems keep Ramadan. However, their ancient way of life provides most of the ritual which they need to tide them over emotional crises, so that church and mosque are in many ways superfluous. A 771 596 man's first loyalty is to his "blood," that is, his extended family. He spends much of his time, effort, and material goods keeping the family together and avenging any deed which has up-

[771] [596] [608] set its internal stability. The very act of vengeance is a ritual, as is the constant repetition of the need for vengeance. The rites of blood brotherhood and godfatherhood are rituals performed by Catholic and Moslem alike.

776 Both Catholics and Moslems believe in a host of malevolent spirits which pay the mountains a seasonal visit in the springtime, and which can sometimes be kept at bay by the use of amulets. These evil spirits are of course the symbols of the general hunger, illness, and irritability which beset the mountaineers at
753 this critical season. Catholics and Moslems alike attribute non-traumatic illnesses to spells cast by magicians, through the agency of hair and nail clippings. Wasting illnesses, such as consumption and cancer, may be attributed to vampires, sucking their victim's blood.

754 A vampire is said to be a human being, usually but not always a woman, who can change herself into an insect and fly into a room in which her victim is sleeping. As she fills with the blood, she has to leave now and then to spit it out. A person who finds such a gobbet of blood on the path is lucky; he can wrap it up and keep it as an amulet to protect him against vampires--and incidentally probably expose himself and his family to tuberculosis.

When people are hungry and ill, it is easy to suspect others of evil magic. The person named as a witch or vampire will of course be someone whose actions are eccentric or mysterious, who is a cause of disturbance in the community, and whose loss will not be greatly felt. If a child is suffering from malnutrition its parents may accuse some old woman, and drag her from her house. They will accuse her of having sucked blood from the child, and force her to spit in the child's mouth. Under protest she may spit merely in order to get away. If the child recovers, then the parents are sure she is a vampire; if the child dies she was innocent for her spittle did not cure it. People do not like being accused of witchcraft, or of having their aged grandmothers hauled off for trial; such actions, like the very suspicion itself, may result in bloodshed.

782 The Ghegs are great oath-swearers. Between blood feuds rivals will swear to keep the peace, on a stone in the presence of the